Gunston Classics

PETER RABBIT and WHITE RABBIT

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Gunston Classics

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GUNSTON CLASSICS

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Peter Rabbit
&
Little White Rabbit

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and
Little White Rabbit

NEARLY all little boys and girls know that Peter Rabbit lived with his mother and his little sisters, Flopsy, and Mopsy, and Cotton-tail, away down in a sand bank, under a fir tree at the edge of a deep, deep wood. Their house was cozy and warm in winter, and just as cool and comfortable as could be in summer. It was a very happy little family, and as for Old Mother Rabbit, there is no doubt about it, she was the

very nicest rabbit-mother in the wide, wide world.

On warm summer days she would pack her big market basket full of goodies, and then she would call her little children and say: "Come, my dears! We are going to the wood, away down by Clover Brook, for the whole day long."

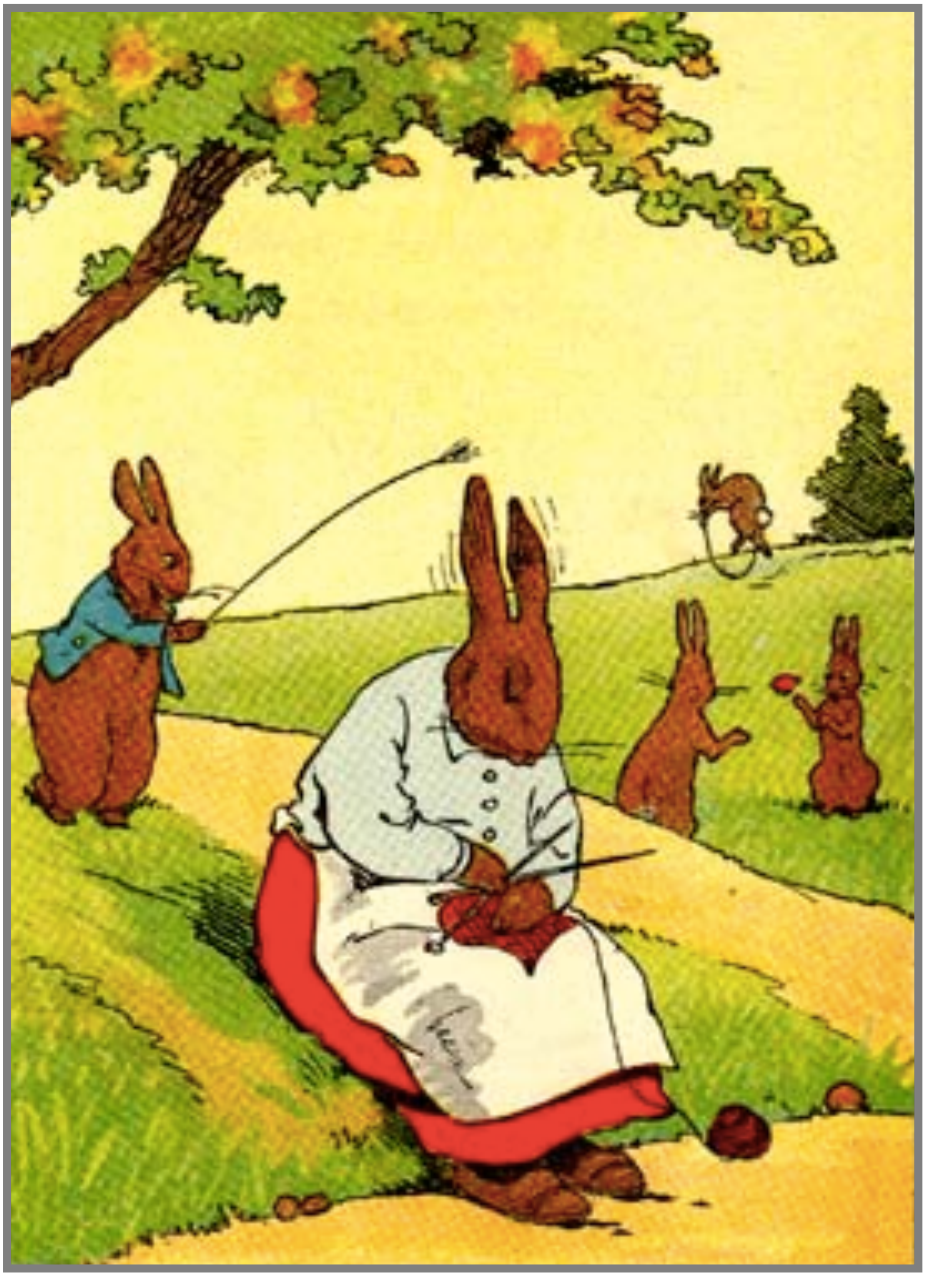
"Hurrah!" Peter would cry, jumping up and down like a little wild Indian.

And Mopsy, and Flopsy, and Cotton-tail would cry: "Picnic! Picnic! Picnic!" and skip and hop from one end of the house to the other.

Then they would all set off for

Clover Brook in the deep, deep wood, carrying swings, and skipping ropes, and bean bags, and, oh, no end of playthings. Peter would always carry the lunch basket because, as he would whisper to Mother Rabbit, it is a boy's place to do such things. Mother Rabbit would take her knitting along, but most always she would fall asleep after luncheon; and then Peter, who was forever brimming over with mischief, would take a little straw and tickle his mother's ears. Goodness! it was funny to see Mother Rabbit's ears wiggle, as she would jump up and say: "Shoo, flies!"

Then they would all roar with



laughter, and Mother Rabbit would look as cross as two sticks, but, of course, she was only pretending to be cross. Often they would wade in the cool trickling brook, and then, when their mother had spread the feast, such lots of fun those little rabbits did have!

Now, however pleasant everything might be, Peter was sometimes very naughty. Listen to this: One day he ran off and climbed up on the miller's wagon and hid in a sack of corn which happened to be open, and rode all the way to the mill, and came within an inch of being dumped into the grinder. Just by mere chance the miller saw the tip end of Peter's

little white tail in the corn, and pulled him out in the nick of time. When Mother Rabbit heard about his narrow escape she was so overcome that she had to go straight to bed.

Peter was dreadfully sorry, and he told his mother that in future he would always try with all his might to be a good little rabbit. And he kept his promise for a long, long time, until one afternoon, when along came Jack-the-Jumper, who, in his bold little way, told Peter that he could beat him in a race to the end of the lane.

"Bet you can't!" said Peter.

"Bet I can!" said Jack-the-Jumper.

Then off they started. Mother Rabbit could have been heard calling Peter to come back at once, but when little rabbits are running like the wind they can't hear very well. So it is safe to say that Peter either did not hear or did not want to hear his mother calling him. Well, when they had reached the end of the lane with neither one the winner Peter said: "Huh! I didn't try to run very fast."

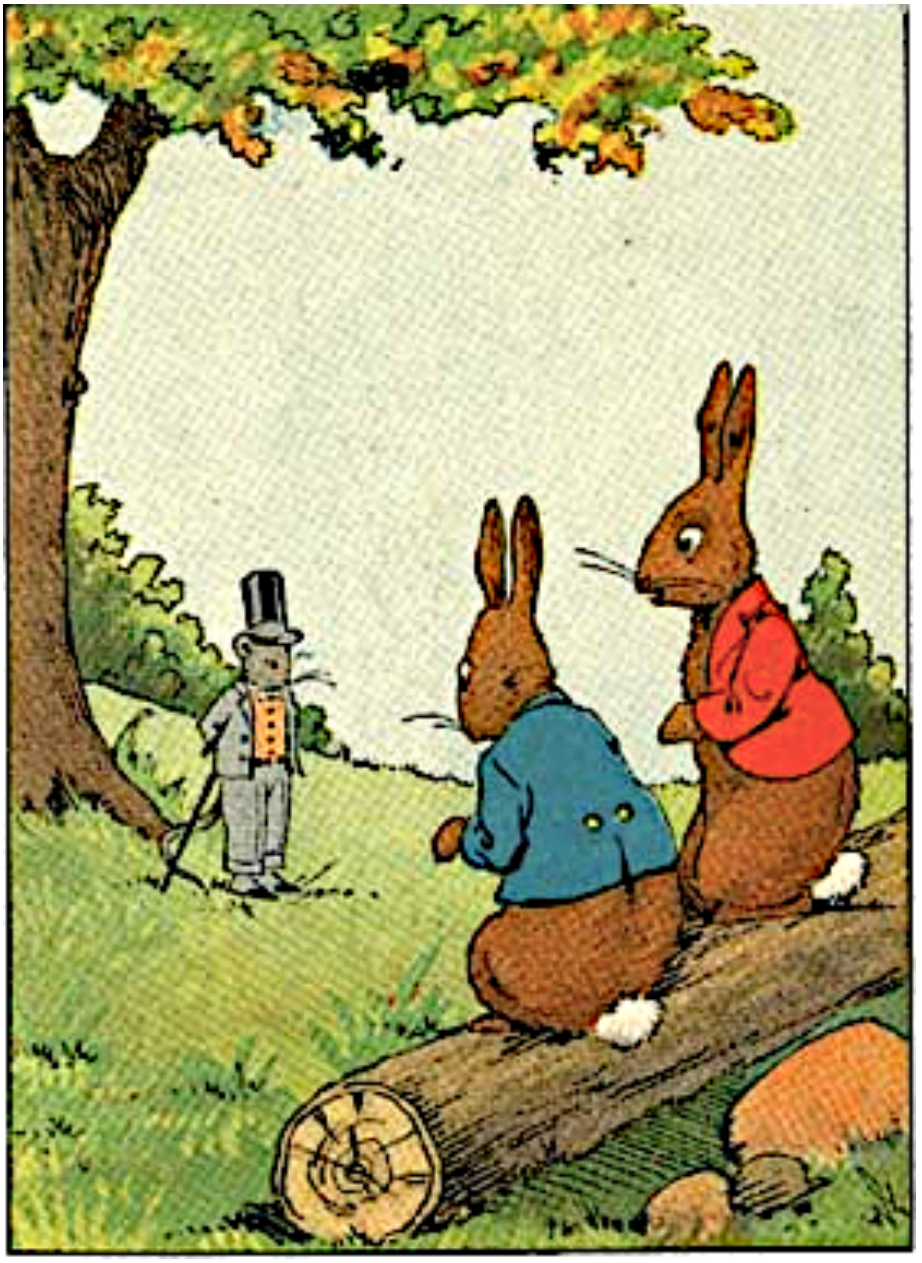
And Jack-the-Jumper said: "Huh! I didn't run half as fast as I can run."

They would have gotten into an argument then and there, but just at that moment Mr. Rufus Rat

happened to come strolling along. He was a city rat and he had been visiting his country cousin, Mr. Reuben Rat, who lived in Mr. McGregor's barn. Mr. Rufus Rat was quite a dandy, and he wore a silk hat, and patent leather shoes, and he carried a cane.

"My dear rabbits," he said with a flourish of his cane, "let me tell you about the curious creature I saw as I went through Mr. McGregor's garden."

Now Peter and Jack-the-Jumper were brimful of curiosity and their eyes grew as big as saucers. Besides they were greatly impressed with Mr. Rufus Rat's fashionable clothes.

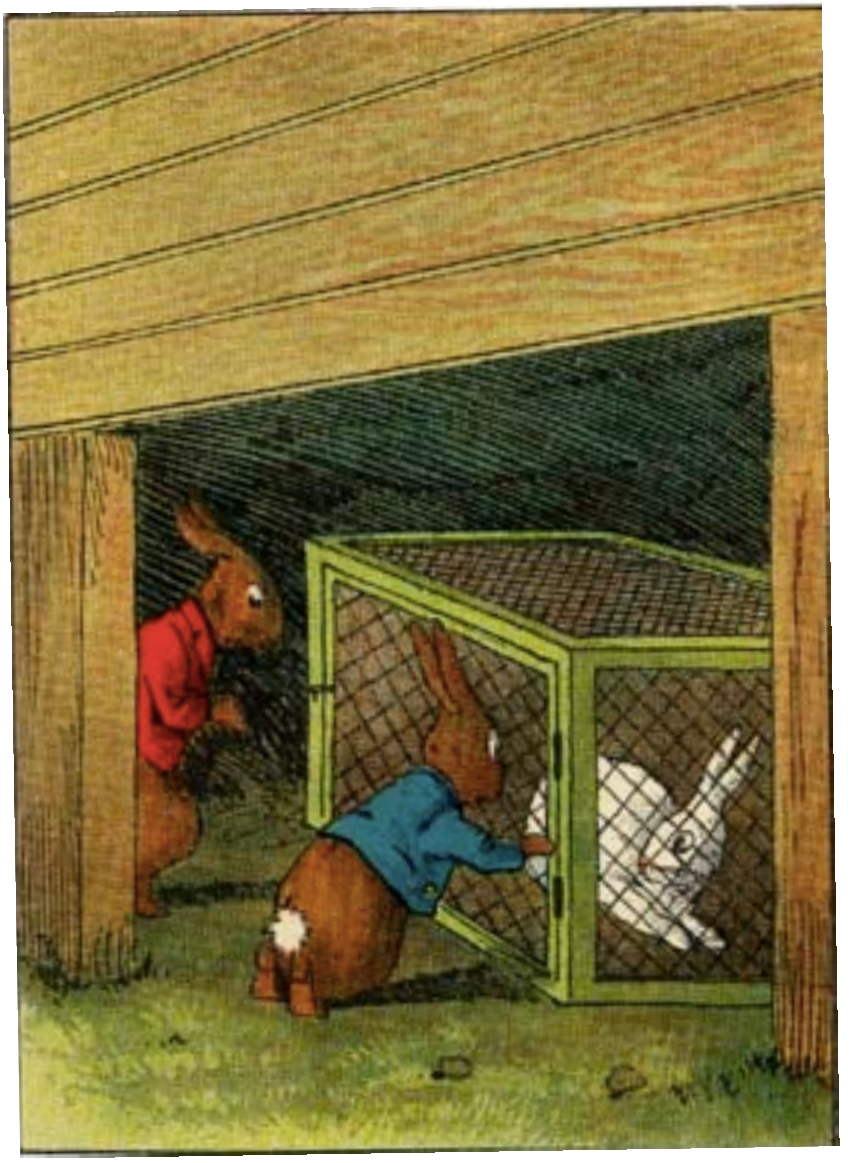


So they sat down on a log waiting to hear what this stylish creature had to tell. Mr. Rufus Rat told them that he had seen, with his own eyes, in Mr. McGregor's garden, a rabbit with perfectly white fur. Peter and Jack-the-Jumper looked at each other in the greatest astonishment. Why, they had never heard of such a thing! They would go and see for themselves. So they jumped up and said goodbye to Mr. Rufus Rat, and scampered down the road at break-neck speed.

Before long they reached Mr. McGregor's garden, and sure enough, there under the shed, in a wire cage, was a little rabbit with perfectly

white fur. Peter and Jack-the-Jumper were too surprised for words, and they ran over to the cage, hoping that the little white rabbit would make friends with them. Now, Little White Rabbit (that was his name) had never seen little brown rabbits before and he became so agitated that he began to tremble from head to foot. But Peter and Jack-the-Jumper assured him that they would do him no harm, and straightway Little White Rabbit braced up, and said that it must be lovely to be out in the Big World.

"So it is," said Peter, and then a bright idea came to him, and he added: "See here, Little White



Rabbit, why don't you come along with us today? We will show you all the sights, and we'll bring you back home safe and sound."

"Ah, I would love to go with you, but I cannot get out of this cage," replied Little White Rabbit with a doleful shake of his head.

"Oh, that is just as easy as can be," spoke up Jack-the-Jumper. "All there is to do is to lift the latch of the door, and you can walk right out." And to prove his words Jack-the-Jumper stood on tiptoe, lifted the latch, and *presto!* open swung the door. But Little White Rabbit did not move an inch. You see, it was this way: He had never, never been

out of his cage for even one minute, and when he saw that he really could go out he was scared to pieces. At last Peter and Jack-the-Jumper just had to pull him out.

Then Peter took one of his little white paws and Jack-the-Jumper took the other, and away they ran down the garden walk. Peter told Little White Rabbit it would be best to get out of Mr. McGregor's garden as quickly as possible. Little White Rabbit nodded his little white head, while his heart was going pit-a-pat. First they stopped at the duck pond and chatted with the ducks, and then they went to the pasture where they saw the little lambs and a big red

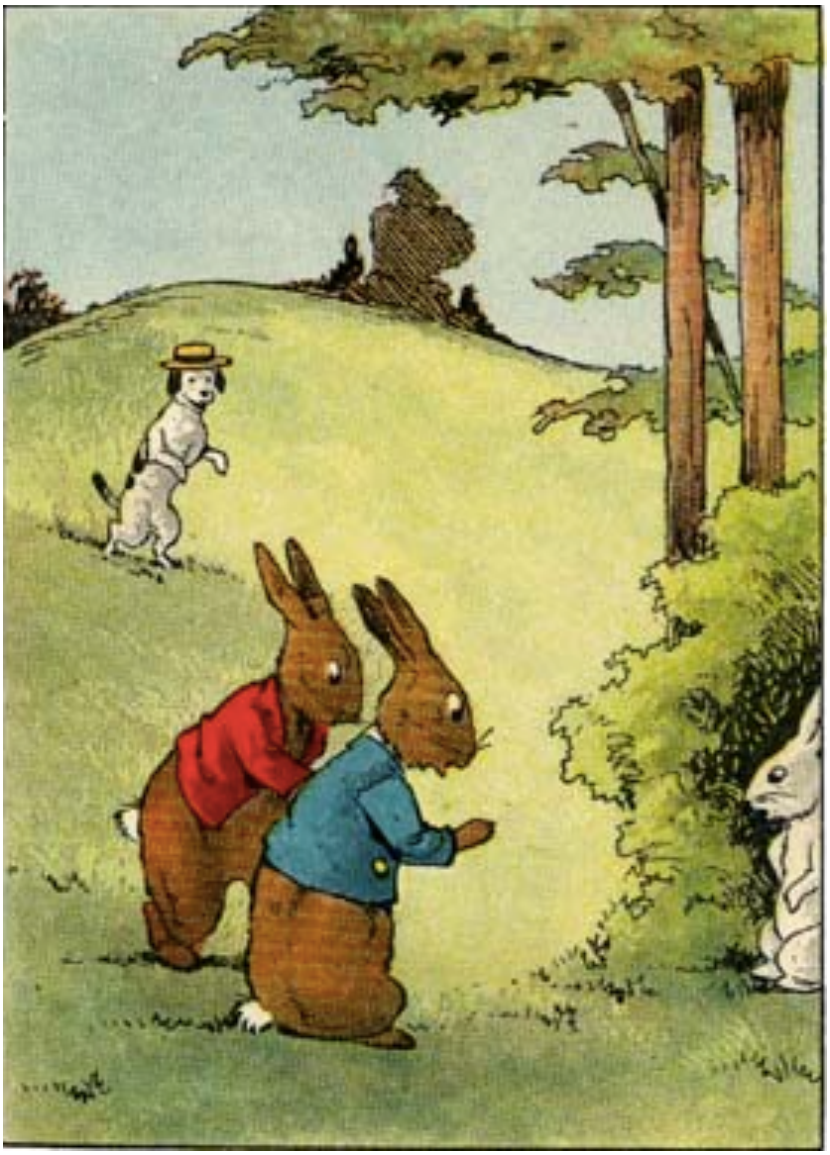
cow. Little White Rabbit asked ever and ever so many questions, for he was really bewildered at the sights he was seeing. When they came to the edge of the wood Little White Rabbit hung back and said it looked too dark in there and that he would much rather stay out in the nice bright sunshine; and, while Peter and Jack-the-Jumper were trying to persuade him not to be afraid to go into the wood, they saw a little spotted dog coming over the hill.

Little White Rabbit began to tremble all over, and he crouched down behind a little bush, fully expecting to be eaten alive by the little spotted dog.

"See here, Little White Rabbit," said Peter quite severely, "if you are going to behave that way, afraid of this and afraid of that, just like a 'fraid cat, you're going back home."

Little White Rabbit whimpered that he couldn't help being afraid, but worst of all he didn't know the way back home, and besides he really and truly wanted to see the Big World.

"Well, stop acting like a baby," said Jack-the-Jumper in the bravest voice you ever heard. And all the while the little spotted dog was coming closer and closer and closer. Now this is a secret: Peter and Jack-the-Jumper were just as much afraid



of the little spotted dog as Little White Rabbit was, but after putting on such a bold front it wouldn't have done for them to admit that they too were afraid. Besides, there was no place where they could hide.

By this time the little spotted dog came trotting up. He looked very much excited and he was panting for breath, but his tail was wagging and that was a sign that he wanted to make friends.

"Hello, little rabbits!" he called, and he stopped and began to fan himself with his little straw hat. "My goodness, aren't you going to the Hallowe'en party?"

"Hallowe'en party? What's that?"

asked Peter and Jack-the-Jumper in one breath.

Spotty, for that was the name of the little spotted dog, just had to laugh at the idea of anyone not knowing what a Hallowe'en party is, so he proceeded to tell them all about the party that was to be held in Silver Glen, and that everybody was invited, and that everyone must wear funny costumes, and carry Jack-o'-lanterns, and play all kinds of pranks, and cut up all kinds of capers, and that there would be no end of goodies, such as nuts, and cakes, and bones, and dear knows what all to suit everybody's taste and fancy.

Little White Rabbit on hearing such friendly talk took courage and ventured out from behind the bush. "Will there be lettuce?" he piped in a timid little voice.

Spotty went into gales of laughter and rolled over and over on the grass. Little White Rabbit saw nothing funny in what he had said, so he hung his head and looked very much hurt. Then Spotty felt sorry that he had laughed at Little White Rabbit, and he said: "There will be more lettuce than a whole bushel of rabbits could eat."

Then Peter and Jack-the-Jumper and Little White Rabbit told Spotty they wanted ever so much to go to

the Hallowe'en party, and begged him to tell them where to get the funny costumes they must wear, and the Jack-o'-lanterns they must carry.

"Listen to me, little rabbits," said Spotty. "In Mossy Cave there lives the Old Witch Woman, and it is she who makes all the funny costumes, and the Jack-o'-lanterns, and all the other jolly things for Hallowe'en parties. Besides, she is the very person who rides a broom seventeen times higher than the moon and sweeps the cobwebs from the sky."

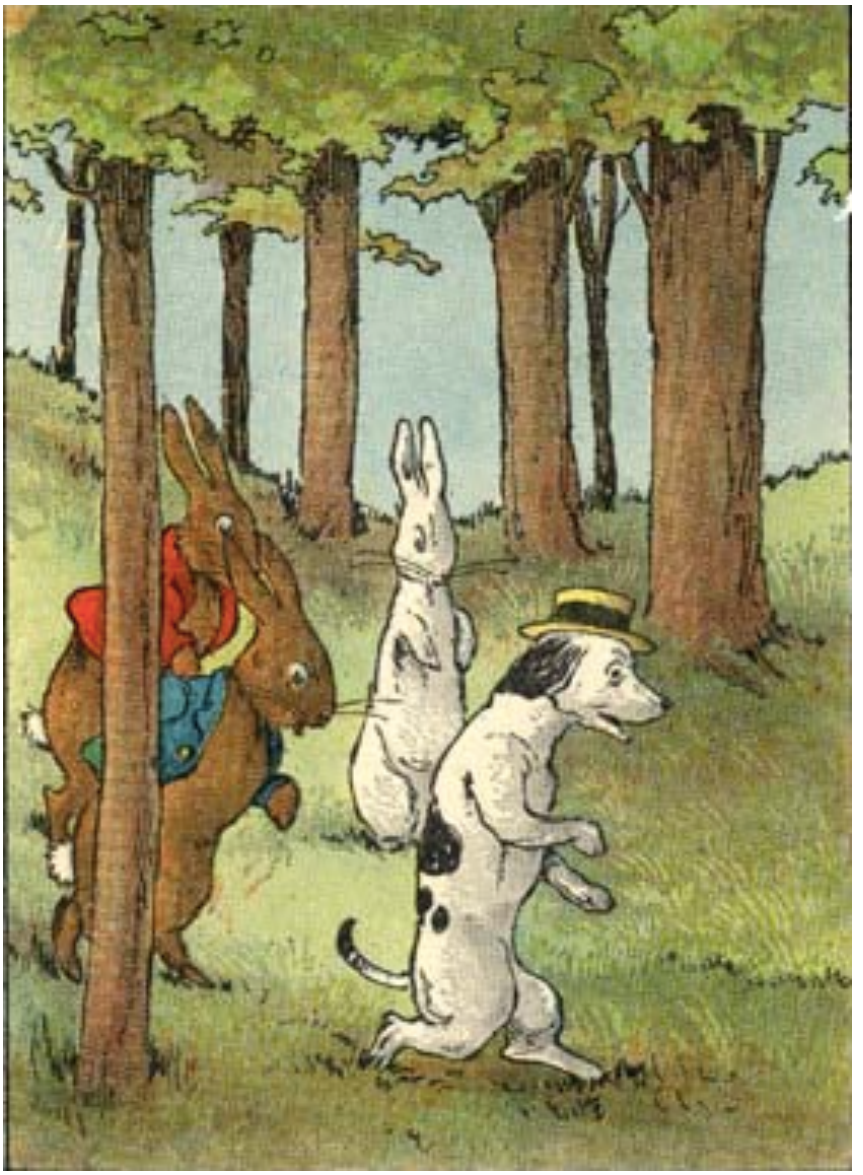
"Oh!" cried Peter, all a-quiver with excitement.

"Oh!" cried Jack-the-Jumper, wiggling his little nose.

"Oh!" cried Little White Rabbit, blinking his eyes.

"Just come along with me," said Spotty, "and I will take you to Mossy Cave, and the Old Witch Woman will give you funny costumes to wear and little Jack-o'-lanterns to carry. But we must hurry because she starts to sweep the cobwebs from the sky at sundown."

Then Spotty and those three little rabbits started off, running as fast as their little legs would carry them through the wood. And Little White Rabbit didn't have another word to say about being afraid. On their



way they saw Old Miss Tilly Turtle sitting on a log sunning herself, and Peter couldn't help but stop for a second and ask her if she were going to the Hallowe'en party.

Old Miss Tilly Turtle stretched her neck, and turned it from side to side in turtle fashion, and replied that she was so slow of gait that the party would probably be over by the time she could get there. Peter and Jack-the-Jumper and Spotty felt very sorry for her. As for Little White Rabbit, he just stared and stared at Old Miss Tilly. Really it was most impolite, but of course he could be excused for his bad manners as he had never been out in

the Big World before. Then off they ran on their way, and at last they came to Mossy Cave.

Spotty, who seemed to know just what to do, pulled a rope which hung before the door, and a bell went, "Jingle-jingle," and then a voice said: "Come in!"

The Old Witch Woman sat beside a table sewing, just as fast as ever she could sew, on the queerest things you ever saw. She wore a peaked hat, and a green bodice, and a red petticoat, and her eyes twinkled like two black coals. She knew Spotty and she took his little paw which he very politely held up to her to shake. Then she looked around and said:

"Whom have you here with you, Spotty?"

"Oh," said Spotty, "these are my little rabbit friends, and their names are Peter Rabbit, and Jack-the-Jumper, and Little White Rabbit; and if you please they would like little masquerade suits of clothes to wear at the Hallowe'en party, and little Jack-o'-lanterns to carry."

"You don't say so?" said the Old Witch Woman, and straightway she gathered up a lot of suits of clothes, and then she called Spotty and slipped a little clown suit over his head, and when she saw how funny he looked she threw back her head and cried: "Haw! Haw! Haw!"

Then she clapped an Indian suit over Peter's head, and Peter was so tickled that he just had to hop up and down and whoop like a little Indian. Then she put a cowboy suit on Jack-the-Jumper, and he pranced around and around too pleased with himself for anything. Little White Rabbit looked too cunning for words in a little white bearskin suit, and the Old Witch Woman said: "You're dressed like a little Eskimo."

Of course Little White Rabbit was pleased to pieces, but he was much too timid to say a word, and all he could do was twitch his ears like most little rabbits do when they are

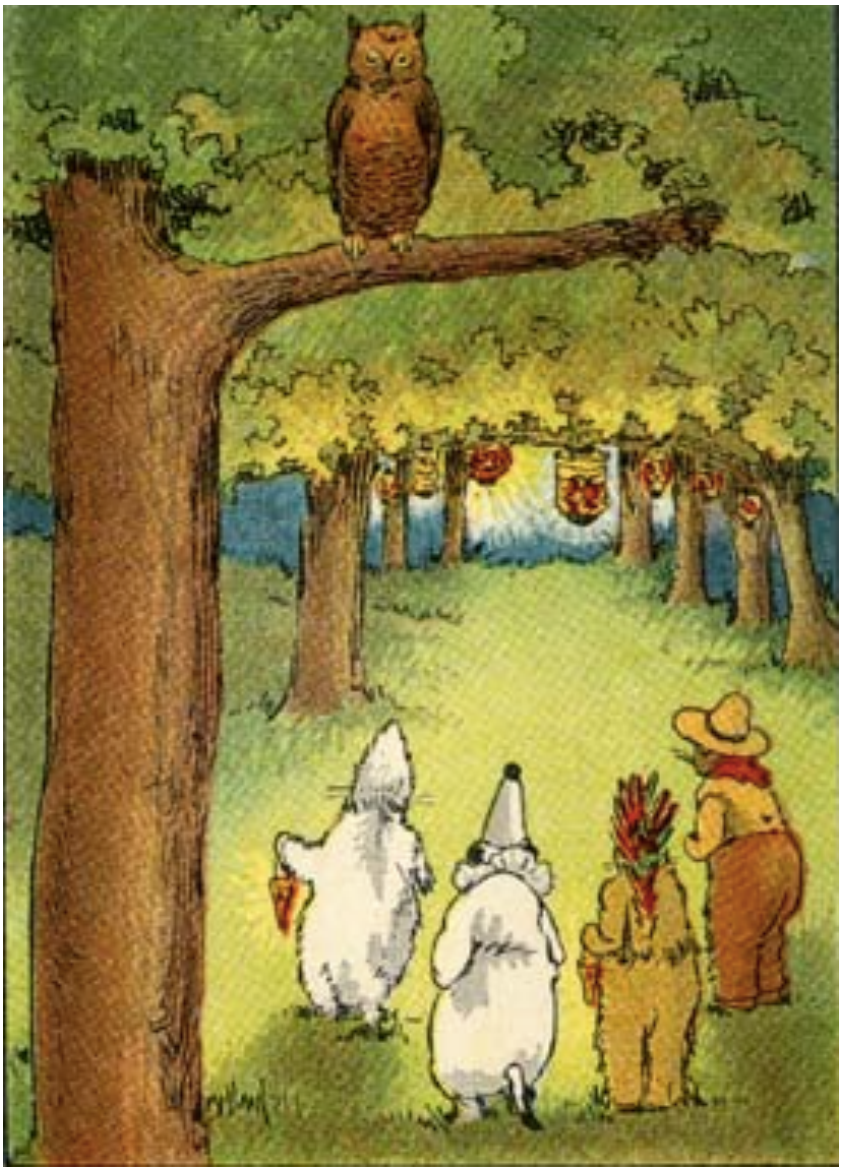
excited. Then the Old Witch Woman gave them Jack-o'-lanterns which were made out of carrots and lighted by glow-worms. Little White Rabbit was on the point of taking a bite out of his Jack-o'-lantern, but Peter caught him just in time and told him he was dreadfully ashamed of such manners. Little White Rabbit whispered to Peter that he would try not to make any more mistakes.

The Old Witch Woman told them they need not return the masquerade suits, because they were really and truly intended for their very own. My! how pleased they were. And then after thanking the Old Witch

Woman they set off for the Hallowe'en party in Silver Glen.

It was the most beautiful spot they had ever laid eyes on. Little White Rabbit was as sure as two buttons that it was Fairyland, and no one disputed him. Gay lanterns hung from the trees, and the Cricket Orchestra, seated in an elderberry bush, played the gayest tunes you ever heard. Old Oliver Owl sat on the low limb of a sycamore tree at the entrance and said very pompously to everybody: "Who-oo?"

Oh, such crowds as there were! Little Squirrelie Squirreliekin, in a little jester suit with bells all over him, waved his hand, and there was



Little Bunnie Bunnickin dressed as a policeman, and Little Bessie Beetle looking too cunning for words in a fluffy green ballet dress. Of course the Elves were there, Eddie and Etta, and Elfie, and all their little Elf cousins in pretty spangly costumes. All of a sudden, Eddie Elf, who was the master of ceremonies, rang a great big blue bell and everybody formed in line for the grand march.

When the music started they marched in front of the grandstand where were seated Mrs. Muskrat in her pink satin party frock, and Mrs. Molly Mole in royal raiment with a crown on her head, and Old Doctor Hare, looking fine as a fiddle in

evening clothes. The audience applauded and cheered as the little masqueraders marched by, and finally decided that Spotty and Peter wore the cutest costumes. So Peter was presented with a candy apple on a stick, and Spotty was given a great big bone. Spotty wasn't seen again that night, and it was supposed that he ran off to bury his bone.

All kinds of tricks were played on everybody, and such laughing and shouting you never heard in all your life. Little White Rabbit tumbled in a tub of water trying to show his skill in grabbing one of the crab-apples which were bobbing all around on top of the water. Gracious! how

he yelled, and Ducky Daddles had to come to his rescue and pull him out. Peter called him "cry baby," and Little White Rabbit's feelings were so hurt that he sat in a corner until refreshments were served, and then he was the first one at the table, for he was very hungry and had remembered that Spotty had said that there was to be more lettuce than a whole bushel of rabbits could eat.

The feast was spread under a dogwood tree, and it was so bountiful that everybody declared that never before had they seen anything like it. After the feast Peter and Jack-the-Jumper thought they had better be starting home, so they called for

Little White Rabbit to come along, and then they said good-night to everybody and started off. But they had not gone very far before they became uncertain about the right direction. Peter was sure it was one way, and Jack-the-Jumper was just as sure it was another, and first they would go the way Peter thought was right, and then they would turn about and go the way Jack-the-Jumper thought was right. Before long they were doing nothing but running backwards and forwards; and then to cap the climax Little White Rabbit stuck a briar in his foot, and he said he could not take another step.

"This is what you get for asking him to come along," said Jack-the-Jumper.

"You asked him as much as I did," retorted Peter.

Then they began to quarrel, and Little White Rabbit began to cry, and dear knows what would have happened if the Old Witch Woman had not suddenly come flying down from the sky on her broom.

"Shame on you little rabbits for carrying on that way," she rebuked. "Especially after you have been to such a lovely party."

Then Peter explained to the Old Witch Woman that they did not know the way home, and the Old

Witch Woman, who was a very kind-hearted creature, as you all know, said she would see that they got home all safe and sound, and she bade them get into her basket which hung over the tail end of the broom.

Peter and Jack-the-Jumper were so delighted that they jumped up and down and clapped their hands. But Little White Rabbit, who simply couldn't help being timid, piped out: "Please don't take us up seventeen times higher than the moon."

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" cried the Old Witch Woman, but all the same she promised that she wouldn't go up seventeen times higher than the moon. Then the little rabbits hopped

into the basket, and the Old Witch Woman mounted the broom, and away they went. "Hold on for dear life, little bunnies!" she cried. And up, up, up they went, over tree tops, and fields, and roads, and rivers, and everything. Peter and Jack-the-Jumper were venturesome enough to peep over the side of the basket, but Little White Rabbit crouched away down in the bottom, scared nearly out of his wits, and hoping that it wouldn't be long before he might be safe and sound in his own little wire cage.

At last, when they had reached Mr. McGregor's garden, down they swooped. Little White Rabbit was

in such a hurry to get out that he forgot to thank his friends for their kindness. He also forgot to take his little bearskin Eskimo suit with him.

"It's just as well that he forgot it," said the Old Witch Woman. "He wouldn't have any use for it in his little wire cage."

"It would make a most beautiful rug for my mother's front door," said Peter.

And never a word did the Old Witch Woman say. Then they came to the briar patch, and down they swooped again, and out jumped Jack-the-Jumper. He thanked the Old Witch Woman almost a dozen times, and he waved his hands and

called good-bye until all he could see of the Old Witch Woman and her broom was a wee little speck in the sky.

In a little while the Old Witch Woman and Peter reached the fir tree at the edge of the wood, and after Peter had thanked the Old Witch Woman again and again, he hopped out of the basket; and then what do you suppose happened? Why, the Old Witch Woman cried: "Wait, Peter," and she tossed out to him Little White Rabbit's bearskin Eskimo suit: and then off she went riding away up in the sky, seventeen times higher than the moon.

Now Old Mother Rabbit was at

the door waiting for Peter, and she looked as cross as a bear, but my goodness! when she saw the Indian suit, and the candy apple on a stick, and the Jack-o'-lantern, and the bearskin Eskimo suit which was to be the front door rug, and heard all about the Hallowe'en party in Silver Glen, she forgot all about being angry. Moreover she called Flopsy, and Mopsy, and Cotton-tail who were fast asleep in their little bed to come quick. And when they came in their little nighties, rubbing their sleepy eyes, she told Peter to start all over again and tell about his wonderful adventure.

When Peter had finished, Flopsy

said: "Oh, what a lovely time you had, Peter!"

And Mopsy said: "Oh, I wish I were a boy like Peter!"

And Cotton-tail said: "Oh, how I wish Peter would take us all with him some time!"

And Peter stuck his hands in his pockets, and said: "Maybe I will take you with me the very next time, little sisters."

And Old Mother Rabbit said: "It's midnight! Every one of you get to bed as fast as you can scamper!"

THE
END

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LINDA ALMOND
USA
1881-1987

PETER RABBITS' BIRTHDAY

PETER RABBIT AND LITTLE WHITE RABBIT

WHEN PETER RABBIT WENT TO SCHOOL

PETER RABBIT'S EASTER

PETER RABBIT AND THE OLD WITCH WOMAN

WHEN PETER RABBIT WENT A-FISHING

PETER RABITS' WEDDING